

July 8, 2009

I rise today in support of our nation's small businesses and for the passage of H.R. 2965, the Enhancing Small Business Research and Innovation Act of 2009.

Much of the economic success that we enjoy as a nation is the result of innovation and development by America's small business community. Small businesses employ more than half of all workers in the private sector and generate 60 to 80 percent of new jobs in this country. High-tech small businesses form a growing part of our national economy, particularly in New Jersey. According to the National Science Foundation, New Jersey ranks in the top five among states in both the number of high-tech businesses and the size of the workforce employed by those businesses. Restoring our economic growth will require focusing on this strength and improving it.

To continue our innovation advantage, we must ensure that these high-tech small businesses have a steady stream of new ideas, which are generated by translating basic scientific research into commercial products. A recent analysis by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation found that 77 percent of the award-winning innovative technologies in 2006 came about because of ideas generated from federally funded scientific research. We must give our small businesses the necessary tools to continue to translate this research into innovative technologies and products.

The legislation before us today would help close this gap by expanding and improving two of the SBA's most successful programs: the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program. The SBIR program has proven to be a successful way to advance technological innovation, delivering more than 55,000 patents and hundreds of valuable innovations in agriculture, defense, energy, health sciences, homeland security, space, transportation, and other fields. The program is a unique collaboration, allowing government agencies to fund projects to meet specific agency needs while expanding opportunities for small businesses. SBIR has enhanced the role of innovative small businesses and higher education research institutions in federally-funded research and development, while fostering competition, productivity, and economic growth. I support this program so that it will continue to provide a vital source of funding to establish and grow innovative small businesses.

Our nation's innovation infrastructure, and its underlying science and technology assets, lead the world across a wide range of measures. However, our successes have encouraged other countries to follow our example and boost their innovation infrastructures. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts to boost innovation through research and support high tech companies that will provide the innovation and jobs of the 21st Century. The legislation before us today will give these high-tech small businesses the tools that they need to succeed. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.